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THE OLD AND THE NEW IN METRICS

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This brief paper has arisen out of a request for a review of the recent book on the meters of Greek comedy by Professor John Williams White of Harvard Unviersity.[1] It was proposed that I explain in the briefest manner the chief points of difference between the two schools of metrists now standing in such strong opposition to one another, and give examples of several kinds of verse as read by the two schools. Consequently the paper is something more than a formal review of Professor White's book, and something less than a critical examination. In reviewing the book recently Professor Shorey remarked that it contained "a perfectly lucid and intelligible account of a matter which perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that not more than two or three men in America or ten in Europe have hitherto understood." And that is undoubtedly true. Probably the majority of us gain our knowledge of meters from the introduction or appendix of the editions of classical poetry we are using with our classes, and accept without question the use of metrical and rhythmical terms by the editor. My plan, therefore, is to show the chief points in the discussion that is now shaking to its foundations the whole science of meter and rhythm.

Of course, Professor White had for his aim only the explanation of the meters and rhythms of Greek comedy, but he was forced into a somewhat extended account of his metrical doctrine in general. In the introduction he gives a summary review of the most striking developments in metrical science. There he shows that the discussion of the nineteenth century largely arose through Hermann's attempt to rhythmize the Glyconic. Now the Glyconic in Latin is a very simple octosyllabic verse, – – – ⏑ – ⏑ – –, e.g., *Sic te diva potens Cypri*, but in Greek poetry, even of the fifth century, the first two syllables are still unregulated, and may

[1] *The Verse of Greek Comedy*. Macmillan, 1912.

appear in the forms – –, – ⏑, ⏑ –, ⏑ ⏑. Hermann considered the two unregulated syllables as unrhythmical, composed of two theses. The true meter of the Glyconic began with the third syllable, and had a choriamb (– ⏑ ⏑ –) as its chief characteristic. This meant the recognition of a tetrasyllabic foot, and so Hermann read also the lesser and the greater Asclepiadean, e.g., *O fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro*, or ἦλθες ἐκ περάτων γᾶς ἐλαφαντίναν (– ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –), ὥραν οὐκ ἀπολεῖς οὐδ' ἀπολήψει (– – – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – –); *tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi* . . ., or ὄρνιθες τίνες οἵδ' οὐδὲν ἔχοντες πτεροποίκιλοι (– – – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –).

But the successors of Hermann would not accept the choriambic foot, and Apel "came upon the 'cyclic' dactyl" (⏑ ⏑). This is the beginning of what White terms the "logaoedic school," a school which made extensive use of the cyclic dactyl as the equivalent of the trochee, and rendered much of Greek lyric poetry in logaoedic fashion. Yet this is a decided break with the teachings of the Greek and Roman writers on metric and music, who readily admitted many forms of tetrasyllabic foot, e.g., – ⏑ ⏑ –, ⏑ – – ⏑, ⏑ ⏑ – –, – – ⏑ ⏑. However, the logaoedists gradually gained sway, "predisposed to the rhythms of modern poetry and music." Consequently White, not inaptly, calls these rhythmists "new," in contrast with himself and others of the past fifteen years who follow more fully Aristoxenus, Heliodorus, and other good rhythmists. He repudiates the name "new" as applied to Gleditsch, Weil, Blass, Schroeder, von Wilamowitz, Masqueray, and himself. He feels that the systems of scansion adopted in practically all of our textbooks of the dramatic and lyric poets is an abandonment of the true course. He was himself guilty of going astray when he translated Dr. J. H. H. Schmidt's *Introduction to the Rhythmic and Metric of the Classical Languages*, and regards the present book as a palinode. *Iterare cursus cogor relictos.* It is a kind of "back-to-the-soil" movement. To designate this movement I shall borrow the expression "modern school" from Professor Goodell.

The following are the principles of the logaoedic, or orthodox school, of those, namely, whose theories are the current ones of today. It is of course to be noted that not all of the supporters of

the current doctrines subscribe to all of these principles, but closer specification would carry me beyond my allotted space.

1. The thesis of every foot was marked by a stress-ictus. This was affirmed or tacitly assumed by practically all writers. Real argument on the subject has been chiefly confined to America. Professors Bennett and Goodell have argued at length and with great learning that stress did not exist, and are followed by White, who says: "Quantity, inherent in the language and fixed in almost all syllables, is the solid foundation on which Greek rhythms with their varied orderings of 'times' are based." Elaborate replies have been made to these views by Professors Hale, Hendrickson, and Shorey. But the lines are not drawn strictly between the two schools, for Gleditsch, otherwise close to White, assumes a stress-ictus, while Goodell, leaning decidedly toward the logaoedic school, argues against it. It is claimed that there is no ancient evidence whatever that stress-ictus existed, but that it is a "modern invention" applied to Greek and Latin verse, through the influence of modern verse which is inconceivable without stress upon the thesis. The reply is made that hints of its existence are found in Dionysius Hal., and that it is of necessity inherent in every rhythm, and at the beginning of each rhythmical sequence. The argument against the existence of stress is rather stronger for Greek than for Latin. Professor White thinks that the insistence upon the regular recurrence of stress is largely responsible for the enormous enlargement of the place earlier assigned to logaoedics. But it has not yet been made clear to me that this is a point that can reasonably separate the two schools.

2. No normal simple foot contains more than three syllables. The feet commonly recognized in our textbooks and editions are: – ⏑, ⏑ –, – –, – ⏑ ⏑, ⏑ ⏑ –, ⏑ ⏑ ⏑, – ⏑ –, ⏑ – –. To these may be added the proceleusmatic (⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑), formed by the resolution of a trisyllabic foot. On this point the two schools part company most emphatically. The Greek and Roman metrists recognized the choriamb (– ⏑ ⏑ –), the antispast (⏑ – – ⏑), the major ionic (– – ⏑ ⏑), the minor ionic (⏑ ⏑ – –), and other feet. A consistent scansion of lyrics and choruses as logaoedics necessarily does away with all of these tetrasyllabic feet. But few advanced to the extent

of scanning in logaoedic measure the remarkable minor ionics of the choruses of the Bacchae, e.g.: *πόθι Νύσης ἄρα τᾶς θηροτρόφου θυρσοφορεῖς* (⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ – – ⏑ ⏑ –); or the series of minor ionic dipodies in Arist. *Vesp.* 291 ff.:

ἐθελήσεις τί μοι οὖν ὦ
πάτερ, ἦν σού τι δεηθῶ;
πάνυ γ' ὦ παιδίον. ἀλλ' εἰ-
πέ, τί βούλει με πρίασθαι
καλόν; οἶμαι δέ σ' ἐρεῖν ἀ-
στραγάλους δήπουθεν ὦ παῖ.

And yet Christ writes this meter as major ionic (– – ⏑ ⏑) with anacrusis, and reads the whole then as logaoedic. Shorey treats the minor ionic as follows:

> In the form ⏑ ⏑ ⏓ – the third syllable marks the limit of a rhythmic unit that could be extended to take in the fourth syllable only if that could be shortened into a mere appendage of a sort of quadrisyllabic anapaest. That violence might be possible once but not in a series. The fourth syllable cannot be carried on unaccented to the next foot, for that would yield three unaccented syllables before the next stress, and would, moreover, be merely a shift on paper to a metrical choriamb. We are compelled to stress the fourth syllable and to do so must admit a hold or pause on it or the preceding syllable long enough to constitute virtual "logaoedic" scansion.

In Horace Ode iii. 12, Shorey writes the meter as a succession of ⏑ ⏑ ⏓ –.

Again, we have from the ancient metrists the terms iambic trimeter, trochaic trimeter, anapaestic tetrameter, and other similar expressions, to denote verses of six or eight feet. By accepting the theory of short feet we do away with any really practical use of these expressions, even though we continue to use them. The ancients clearly regarded the iambic, trochaic, and anapaestic dipodies (⏑ – ⏑ –, – ⏑ – ⏑, ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ –) as the unit of measure, and the modern school holds that some genuine meaning must have been attached to the terms. Many of the logaoedic school, to be sure, say that the iambic meter is ⏑ ⏓ ⏑ ⏓, with a stronger stress on the second long than on the first, and similarly the trochaic unit is ⏓ ⏑ ⏓ ⏑, with a stronger stress on the first long than on the second. In these cases the modern school declares that the iambic unit is ⏑ – ⏑ –, and that the first two syllables of this unit constitute the arsis, and the second two the thesis. Similarly the trochaic unit is

– ⏑ – ⏑, where the first two syllables constitute the thesis, and the second two the arsis. The significance and effect of this difference of treatment will become clear later, as will also the effect of the recognition or non-recognition of tetrasyllabic feet in general.

3. All feet must begin with the thesis, a stressed long syllable. If the normal long syllable of the thesis is resolved, one of the short syllables into which it is resolved will be stressed, e.g., ⏑́ ⏑ becomes ⏑́ ⏑ ⏑. This is what we find readily enough in a series of dactyls or trochees, e.g.:

Hoc iter ignavi divisimus, altius ac nos
Praecinctis unum; minus est gravis Appia tardis.

or:

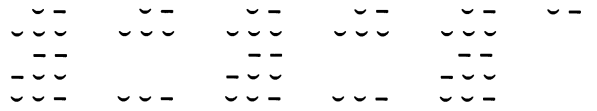
εἰπέ μοι τί μέλλομεν κι-
νεῖν ἐκείνην τὴν χολὴν
ἥνπερ ἡνίκ' ἄν τις ἡμῶν
ὀργίσῃ τὴν σφηκιάν;

But this system gets rid absolutely of the iambus, the anapaest, the lesser ionic, and the antispast. A series of iambi becomes merely a series of trochees with anacrusis. This doctrine is, apparently, responsible for the assumption of the existence of anacrusis. So far as I am aware, anacrusis is not mentioned by an ancient metrist, but is an "invention" of Hermann. By this system an "iambic trimeter" becomes a "trochaic trimeter catalectic with anacrusis." So a series of anapaests becomes a series of dactyls with anacrusis and catalexis. The names are still retained, but indicate only the presence of anacrusis. The modern school seeks to show that "periods in ascending rhythm," that is, those in which the arsis precedes the thesis, developed prior to the development of periods in descending rhythm, and that the latter arose from the former by a process of acephalization. It is said that Hermann's "theory of 'anacrusis,' applied to periods in ascending rhythm, obscures real differences." Professor Goodell had declared that the eleven-syllabled Alcaic is identical with the eleven-syllabled Sapphic, except for a prefixed arsis.

Before giving examples to show the different methods of reading such verses, I shall briefly summarize Professor White's view of the constitution of the iambic trimeter. The metrical unit is a series of four syllables, of which the second and fourth are normally long.

A variation arises only if one of these long syllables is resolved into two short syllables. The first of the four syllables is much more likely to become subject to change. This finds its explanation in the fact that in this group of four syllables long syllables early became established for the second and fourth places, while the first and third remained unregulated. They might be long, or short, or be omitted altogether. Gradually a short syllable became normal for the third place. If we consider the first and second as together constituting the arsis, and the third and fourth as constituting the thesis, we are led up to two of Professor White's favorite rules. These are: (*a*) the integrity of the thesis must be quantitatively maintained, and (*b*) the arsis is normally variable, and may be extremely variable. This accounts for the fact that the second, fourth, and sixth feet of the trimeter never allowed the substitution of the spondee or dactyl.

The following are the quantitative possibilities in the twelve places in an iambic trimeter:

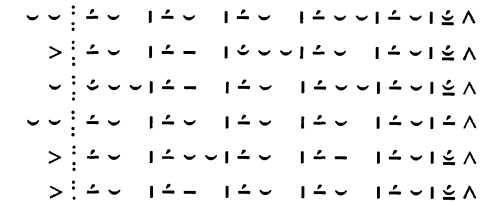


A glance at this scheme shows instantly what is meant by the integrity of the thesis (second, fourth, and sixth feet) and the variability of the arsis (first, third, and fifth feet).

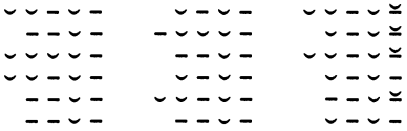
For example Arist. *Eccl.* 266 ff.:

> χαλεπὸν τὸ πρᾶγμ'· ὅμως δὲ χειροτονητέον
> ἐξωμισάσαις τὸν ἕτερον βραχίονα.
> ἄγε νυν ἀναστέλλεσθ' ἄνω τὰ χιτώνια·
> ὑποδεῖσθε δ' ὡς τάχιστα τὰς Λακωνικάς,
> ὥσπερ τὸν ἄνδρ' ἐθεᾶσθ', ὅτ' εἰς ἐκκλησίαν
> μέλλοι βαδίζειν ἢ θύραζ' ἑκάστοτε.

These verses would be scanned by the logaoedic, or orthodox, school:



and by the modern school:

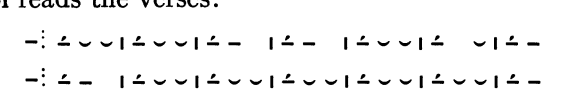


The sign > is the well-known sign to indicate that a long vowel stands where we might expect a short vowel, and must be read as the equivalent of a short vowel.

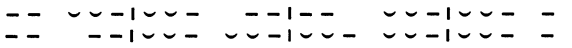
The following verses illustrate the different treatment of anapaests. They are Arist. *Nub.* 1002–1003, written in the Aristophanic tetrameter catalectic:

ἀλλ' οὖν λιπαρός γε καὶ εὐανθὴς ἐν γυμνασίοις διατρίψεις,
οὐ στωμύλλων κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν τριβολεκτράπελ', οἷάπερ οἱ νῦν.

one school reads the verses:



and the other:



4. All feet in a colon (and I think also in a verse and even in a period) must be of exactly the same length, i.e., require exactly the same time in utterance. The standard, or type, or basis, to which all feet must conform is normally the shortest dissyllabic foot in the colon. This principle, when coupled with those already mentioned, becomes extremely important. For example in the Sapphic hendecasyllable:

ποικιλόθρον' ἀθάνατ' Ἀφροδίτα
Integer vitae scelerisque purus.

the quantities are – ⏑ – ⏓ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ – ⏓. An examination of this succession of syllables reveals the fact that the shortest dissyllabic foot that can be formed is the trochee. It will, therefore, be taken as the basis. The verse will then be scanned: ⏑́ ⏑ | ⏑́ > | ⏑́ ⏑ | ⏑́ ⏑ | ⏑́ ⏓. This looks simple, but there are two irregularities in quantity to be noticed. In the second foot – > takes the place of – ⏑. This irrational foot has ample authority in the writings of the ancient rhythmists. The third foot ⏑́ ⏑ is the "cyclic"

dactyl which must be pronounced rapidly enough to occupy the time ordinarily occupied in the pronunciation of a trochee. But scarcely any two modern logaoedists are in agreement as to the method to be adopted in compressing this dactyl. Are all three syllables to be shortened, but the proper proportion of long and short syllables, namely, two to one, to be maintained? Is the third syllable normal, but the first and second shortened to occupy the time of a single long? Is a new relation to be established among all three? It was also pointed out above that there is scarcely a hint in any ancient writer of the very existence of such a foot. Professor Goodell here stands with the modern school, and refuses to recognize such a foot. Yet he scans the verse as logaoedic, but unites with the modern school in explaining that if a dactyl takes the place of a trochee it exemplifies merely the general principle of the variability of the arsis. There is a slight irregularity in the tempo of the colon. The Sapphic strophe does not occur in Greek comedy, so its scansion is not given by White. It is scanned by Gleditsch as follows:

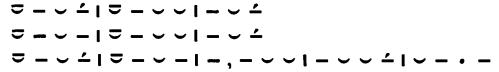
Ποικιλόθρον' ἀθάνατ' Ἀφροδίτα,
παῖ Δίος, δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε,
μή μ' ἄσαισι μήτ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότνια, θῦμον.

A more striking illustration of the differences between the two schools is seen in the Alcaic strophe:

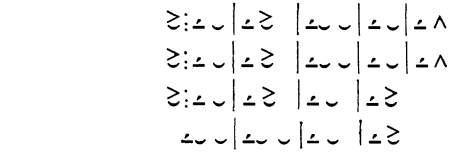
Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte, nec iam sustineant onus
Silvae laborantes geluque
Flumina constiterint acuto.

Ἀσυνέτημι τῶν ἀνέμων στάσιν·
τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔνθεν κῦμα κυλίνδεται,
τὸ δ' ἔνθεν· ἄμμες δ' ἂν τὸ μέσσον
ναῖ φορήμεθα σὺν μελαίνᾳ.

This is scanned by Gleditsch:



and by the logaoedic school:

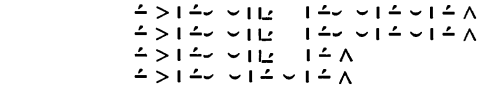


In this strophe the modern school employs tetrasyllabic feet throughout, and feet that are unlike. But even more, one naturally thinks of some of these feet as being in ascending rhythm and others in descending rhythm. The logaoedic school employs its favorite device of anacrusis in order that the whole meter may be in descending rhythm. Professor Goodell, in criticizing the scansion of the modern school, says: "That this line is identical with the eleven-syllabled Sapphic, except for a prefixed arsis, this way of dividing and naming obscures completely. Yet rhythmically that resemblance is fundamental." Absolutely opposed is Professor White's belief. In speaking of Hermann's extensive use of anacrusis he says: "His theory of 'anacrusis,' applied to periods in ascending rhythm, obscures real differences." The layman will ask whether the Sapphic and the Alcaic create in him the same sense of rhythm and the same emotion. If they do, he will side with the logaoedist. If they do not, he will side with the modern school.

One of the Asclepiadean strophes displays still farther the points of difference. For example:

Fies nobilium tu quoque fontium,
Me dicente cavis impositam ilicem
Saxis, unde loquaces
Lymphae desiliunt tuae.

This is read by the logaoedists:



This strophe does not exist as a whole in Greek lyric, but the various parts as they occur are read by the modern school thus:

ἦλθες ἐκ περάτων γᾶς ἐλαφαντίναν [Alc. *Fr.* 33].
λάβαν τῶ ξίφεος χρυσοδέταν ἔχων

ἥδιστον φάος ἡμέρας [Arist. *Eq.* 973–76].
ἔσται τοῖσι παροῦσι καὶ
τοῖς ἀποῦσιν, ἱκνουμένως
ἣν Κλέων ἀπόληται.

– – – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
– – – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
– ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – ⏑ –
– ⏑ – ⏑ ⏑ – –

The scansion on the lesser Asclepiadean by the modern school introduces the antispast (⏑ – – ⏑), a foot which above all others the logaoedic school will not tolerate. Thus Professor Goodell says: "We cannot believe that such a combination of syllables was a real foot in the Aristoxenean sense, a foot employed continuously, by which the character of the rhythm was marked and made intelligible." A part of the reply by Professor White is to show that Swinburne has successfully used the choriamb, and that Professor Gilbert Murray has composed verses in antispasts, believing that this was in Sappho's manner.

We are now in position to formulate some of the positive features of the doctrines of the modern school: (1) a tendency to assume quadrisyllabic measures, or feet, as the unit; (2) the uniform avoidance of anacrusis; (3) the rare use of protraction; (4) the maintenance of the natural quantity of the long syllable of the thesis; (5) the assumption of extreme variability of the arsis, leading to the recognition of differences in the length of the feet composing a verse, or period.

The grounds for these rules (the wording is mine, they are nowhere summarized), cannot be given in brief. One must read Professor White's chapter entitled "Origin of the Forms of Greek Poetry." The actual gains of the modern school to the present are not so much the recognition of this or that point, but rather that their opponents are studying the ancient rhythmists with greater attention. It will also without doubt compel a recognition of the necessity for adopting the historical and comparative method in these investigations.